

Doylestown Township Board of Supervisors

Budget Work Session

Minutes

September 1, 2026

In Attendance:

Board of Supervisors: Chairman, Jennifer Herring, Vice-Chairman, Barbara N. Lyons, Dan Wood, Judy Dixon, and Christina Maida.

Finance Committee: Eric Cornwell, Chairman and member Chris Giolli.

Township Staff: Township Manager, Stephanie Mason, Assistant Township Manager, Andrea Mergner, Finance Director, Ken Wallace, Assistant Finance Director, John Michael Signorelli, Director of Operations, Dave Tomko, Budget Analyst, Ed Ebenbach, Police Chief Charles Zeigler and Lt. Jessica Whiteside.

Ms. Herring welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM.

Public Comment - None

2026 Forecast Summary

Mr. Ebenbach summarized the current 2026-year forecast against budget. He pointed out that we had originally budgeted \$424K of Net Income on \$17.8 m of revenue or 2.3% and are now forecasting \$382K of Net Income on \$18.0 m of revenue or 2.1%. He explained that there was a mix of items - some higher, some lower – and showed some of the more significant variances including:

- Higher Interest, Building Permit and Parks revenue
- Lower Parks & Rec spending
- Lower Wages spending – mainly in Police
- Higher Debt Service payments due to an extra Note interest payment due to delays in receiving the RCAP grant
- Higher than budgeted Township employee health insurance due to deductible payments
- increased solicitor fees
- Unexpected repairs and maintenance of Township boiler, sprinkler and TriCaster equipment

- and higher anticipated snow and ice removal spending

Mr. Wood asked if there were specific drivers for the increase in legal spending. Ms. Mason indicated that much of it related to ordinance work, the data center ordinance and communications related to negotiations.

Ms. Lyons asked how long the Township's current solicitors have been engaged and if they need to attend every meeting. She asked for a comparison of costs over the last three years.

Ms. Dixon asked when the Township anticipates receiving the RCAP grant funding. Ms. Mason stated that the funds are expected in early 2027, noting that the process involves significant coordination and back-and-forth with the state.

Mr. Tomko stated that he will provide a timeline outlining permitting, anticipated timeframes, and closeout requirements for both the DCNR and RCAP grants.

Ms. Dixon also asked about the high-deductible medical plan. Ms. Mason stated that the Township pays the deductible, and this has been in place for over four years.

Ms. Maida asked if any of Park & Recreation variants were due to weather cancellations. Mr. Ebenbach said no. There was discussion about sponsorships and fundraising for performing arts. Mr. Ebenbach stated that the P&R director will present at the next meeting to give some more insight on the department and funds.

2027 Police Staffing

Chief Charles Ziegler presented an overview of the Police Department's staffing and long-term needs. He noted that community growth with new residential and county buildings, combined with evolving technology has increased demands on officers and stated the department currently maintains a minimum staffing level of two officers on the day shift.

The Chief reviewed staffing hours over the past three years across day and night shifts, noting that when only two officers are on duty during an extended incident, the Township must rely on mutual aid from neighboring municipalities. Time off, vacation and sick leave, varies seasonally, which the Chief said makes staffing needs difficult to quantify, since call duration can range from about 25 minutes to over an hour.

The Chief recommended adding one additional officer in 2027 and a second in 2028.

Staffing projections assumed the Township's population could grow in 2027. The Chief noted that the Chief and Lieutenant positions, four sergeants, detectives (who assist patrol but are not counted in patrol staffing), and the highway officer (speed studies, etc.) are not included in the patrol staffing calculation. For context, the Chief referenced Bucks County Police Consortium data from 2024 and noted the Department had 12 officers in 1970 compared to 23 today. He presented the current organizational chart along with a proposed structure reflecting two additional officers, which would bring each squad to five officers.

The Chief's recommendation is to hire one officer in 2027 and one in 2028; the proposal is expected to return to the Board in late 2027, with formal appointments anticipated at the December 2027 and December 2028 meetings. The cost of a new officer in 2027 would be limited to roughly two weeks of salary; by 2029 the Township would carry the full cost of both positions. No new patrol vehicles would be purchased in 2027–2028, but one additional vehicle would be needed in 2029.

Vice-Chairman Lyons noted this should be discussed as part of ongoing labor negotiations. Staff noted that a new officer's starting salary and benefits package is approximately \$150,000, growing to \$250,000 within five years.

The Chief also reported that the department's radios are at end of life (originally purchased in 2014) and the manufacturer no longer produces replacement parts. Replacement cost, including docking stations, is estimated at approximately \$9,500 per radio. The Chief has a pending grant application, with an award decision expected in November; if the grant is not received, he would prioritize replacing five radios based on need, since the grant program typically only partially funds requests. Radio replacement will be included in the capital program, and the department may explore selling the old radios through Municibid.

2027– Public works Staffing

Mr. Tomko noted that the current Parks Department consists of the Park Superintendent and four staff members who are responsible for maintaining all Township parks and their amenities, Township open space, stormwater basins, and bike & hike trails. Their responsibilities include daily inspections of Kids Castle, restroom maintenance, trash collection, dog park upkeep, and annual stormwater basin inspections along with seasonal activities. Mowing responsibilities have also increased as Park staff has taken over additional areas previously maintained by the Township's mowing contractor. In addition,

the expansion of amenities within Central Park has increased staff responsibilities, including maintenance of the area extending from the Police Department parking lot through the courts, Recreation Center, and flower beds, particularly areas that cannot be serviced by commercial mowing equipment. Mr. Tomko also noted that the Park staff also responds to a growing number of service requests, including tree work, fence repairs, and general park and trail maintenance.

Mr. Tomko presented the proposed 2027 staffing needs for Public Works and stated that two additional staff positions, one for the Parks Department and one for Facilities, to support the Central Recreation Center (CRC) and all the campus building maintenance needs. He added that a dedicated Facilities position, would allow Mr. Schea, the fire marshal / facilities manager, to focus more on fire-related duties. He added that he will present a cost estimate for these positions at the next meeting.

The Board also raised whether current facility rental rates are sufficient to cover related overtime costs.

2026-2027 Capital Plan Framework

Mr. Wallace reviewed the capital project timeline and budget, including engineering fees for Bike & Hike trails, and trail-related projects, including the Easton Rd. Trail and Doylestown Country Club Trail. He stated the Traffic signal improvements through the Green Light Go grant funding has been received however, we are still waiting on reimbursement for the previously submitted New Britain Road Trail expenses.

He stated that some of the projects have been moved to 2027, including the Doylestown County Club and flashing-yellow-arrow signal detection project.

Additionally, he added that Kids Castle and its associated engineering costs were discussed in connection with the capital expenditure (Cap-X) form process.

Ms. Lyons asked how engineering costs are reviewed and whether the Township reviews engineers' invoices. Staff confirmed that invoices are reviewed and tracked against the Cap-X form, and that staff brings project proposals to the Board. The Board requested comparison data on their engineering and consultant costs.

Mr. Wallace stated that the dog park fencing project will be deferred and rescope as it was determined by the Parks & Recreation director that it was not a priority at this time.

Mr. Wallace stated that the next Budget Work Session will be held on October 6, 2026, at 5 PM and discussion of the 2026 and 2027 full forecast, 2027 capital and funding, millage plan, Pension MMO's, Solar Panels and the Fire Companies will be discussed.

Ms. Mason gave a brief overview and stated that the EAC shared the Solar Feasibility Study, conducted by the PA Solar Center with the Finance Committee for review at its next meeting. The EAC is considering recommending rooftop solar for the CRC but is seeking additional financial insight regarding the purchase/buyout option versus a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) before presenting a recommendation to the Board for consideration as part of the budget process.

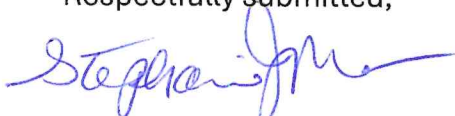
Ms. Mason provided an update regarding the Fire Company and its planning for future staffing and operational needs. She stated that the Fire Company is looking to establish a steering committee that would include one Township staff member and one Board of Supervisors member.

Ms. Mason discussed the challenges facing volunteer fire companies throughout Pennsylvania, particularly the continued decline in the number of volunteers. Many communities have transitioned, or are beginning to transition, from fully volunteer departments to hybrid or fully paid staffing models. Based on current trends, the question is becoming not if a transition will be necessary, but when. The goal is to ensure the Township is financially and operationally prepared for that transition.

The Fire Company has been evaluating its future needs, including reviewing the DCED and County studies and examining the experiences of other fire companies that have transitioned to hybrid staffing models.

Being no further business, Ms. Herring adjourned the meeting at 6:47PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Stephanie J. Mason
Secretary